

TITLE: METHOD AND MEANS FOR AN OVERFLOW ASSEMBLY TO
BATHTUBS AND THE LIKE

5 CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/222,062 filed August 16, 2002 and U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 10/229,533 filed August 28, 2002.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In new building construction, the plumbers prefer not to put the finished closure valves in the bottom of tubs, or the finished decorative plate over the overflow outlet at the end, of the tub until the project is finished because these elements will be often damaged as the construction project is brought to a close. Further, the piping for both of the outlets needs to be checked for leaks before the inspection process is completed. The test involves running water down the vent for the drain until it reaches a level above the tub and the tester then determines whether any of the piping leaks. Thus, when the testing operation arrives, a plug is put in the bottom drain of the tub and some sort of seal plate is placed at the end of the tub on the overflow outlet.

Existing overflow plates have a center opening therein. There are either two or four small screw holes in the plate adjacent the center opening wherein two of the holes are used to hold the plate to the plumbing fixture. In some cases there is a fitting so that the screw hole is located directly in the middle of the access hole. In that case, that hole is in the way when the testing procedure is implemented. In any event, the testing procedure usually involves stuffing a balloon through the large center opening

into the pipe in the wall and the pipe is sealed when the balloon is inflated. Further, existing seal plates normally have to be removed when the decorative plate is put on. Two screws which use the screw openings of the plate typically
5 hold the decorative plate in position.

A more recent version is shown in the U.S. Patent 5,890,241 in which an overflow system for a bathtub has an overflow port and has a drain pipe in connection with the overflow port. A flexible diaphragm is imposed over overflow
10 drain pipe secured to and engages the inner face of the sleeve. Screws extend through the plate which has a center opening. A screw extends through the plate to hold the cap in place. The cap has a conventional side rim extending around the plate and diaphragm. A cut-out portion of the cap
15 provides for water flow. The diaphragm seals the overflow pipe when the system is being tested for leaks with pressurized fluid. Following the tests, when the fluid is removed, the diaphragm is cut or slashed to open the overflow port to provide fluid flow. While this device
20 serves the intended function, it is expensive to make and more cumbersome to assemble.

It is, therefore, a principal object of the invention to provide a method and a means for an overflow assembly for bathtubs and the like which will safeguard the overflow
25 system during construction; prepare the system for testing; and facilitate the final installation of the bathtub hardware.

A further object of the invention is to facilitate the testing procedure of the overflow system before the final
30 installation has taken place, and to permit the assembly of parts without the use of screws, screw holes, and the like.

It is further an object of this invention to provide an overflow fitting which will safeguard the overflow system during construction.

5 A further object of the invention is to provide an overflow fitting which will prepare the overflow system for testing.

A still further object of the invention is to provide an overflow fitting which allows a user to install the overflow fitting without using solvent cement.

10 These and other objects will be apparent to those skilled in the art.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An overflow system in the bathtub has an overflow port
15 and has a drain pipe in connection with the overflow port. A threaded flange has a stub shoulder on one end which is fitted into a circular sleeve on the overflow port. The threaded flange has exterior threads on its outer surface and a thin diaphragm secured to the end thereof opposite to
20 the stub shoulder. A large sealing washer embraces the outside of the circular flange on the overflow port and extends partially over the threads of the threaded flange. A large internally threaded nut is threadably mounted on the outer end of the threaded flange and compresses the sealing
25 washer against a vertical flange on the port to seal the connection between the threaded flange and the port. A decorative cap is frictionally snapped into engagement with protrusions on the outer surfaces of the nut. The cap can be removed if needed to permit the plumber to gain access to
30 the diaphragm to cut it open for fluid flow after the system has been tested for leaks, or put in place after the cut takes place.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a partial perspective view of a conventional bathtub environment utilizing the invention of this application;

Fig. 2 is a large scale section view taken on line 2-2 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a perspective exploded view of the cap, nut, washer, membrane, and upper pipe;

Fig. 4 is a cross sectional view of the assembled components of Fig. 3;

Fig. 5 is a perspective view showing the piercing of the Membrane;

Fig. 6 is a sectional side view of a conventional bathtub environment utilizing the device of this invention;

Fig. 7 is a side view of the device of this invention;

Fig. 8 is a front view of the device of this invention;

Fig. 9 is an exploded perspective view of the device of this invention; and

Fig. 10 is a perspective view of the installation of the device of this invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

With reference of Figs. 1 and 2, a conventional bathroom structure 10 has a floor 12, and a hollow wall 14 with a wall opening 16 therein. A conventional bathtub ("tub") 18 has a base 20 which rests upon floor 12.

Sidewalls 22 extend upwardly from base 20 as does an end wall 24. The end walls 24 extend upwardly from the bottom 26, perpendicular to the side walls 22, and have an outer

surface. A bottom 26 dwells in spaced relation to the floor 12.

A conventional drain port 28 is located in bottom 26. A conventional overflow port 30 is located in the end wall 24 1 (Fig. 2). A vertical drain pipe 32 extends downwardly from drain port 28, and overflow drain pipe 34 extends downwardly from overflow port 30. A horizontal pipe 36 connects pipes 32 and 34. A drain pipe 38 extends downwardly from the junction between pipes 34 and 36.

10 A conventional vertical vent pipe 40 is located within the hollow wall 14. Pipe 42 interconnects vent pipe 40 and the upper end of overflow drain pipe 34 (Fig. 2). Conventional water pipes 44 extend through hollow wall 14 and are connected to valve 46 which is interconnected to 15 conventional control member 48 and faucet 50.

Fig. 3 shows a radial flange 52 formed on the upper end of pipe 34 and has a center opening or port 54. Water can flow through center opening 54 into drain pipe 34. Sleeve 56 extends longitudinally outwardly from the perimeter of 20 opening 54 forming a surface on its inner diameter.

A hollow cylindrical fitting 58 has a hollow cylindrical shoulder 60 on its inner end, a threaded outer surface 62, and a thin plastic diaphragm 64 sealed across its outer end. The shoulder 60 has an outer diameter that 25 can be manually frictionally inserted within the surface of the inner diameter of sleeve 56 creating sufficient frictional force to resist opposing force applied by fluid pressure.

30 A pliable sealing ring or washer 66 has a center bore 67 which can frictionally receive the exterior surface of fitting 58 to engage the radial flange 52 of port 54 to seal the connection between sleeve 56 and shoulder 60. The

longitudinal thickness of washer 66 is less than the longitudinal thickness of fitting 58 so that some of the threaded surface 62 adjacent the diaphragm 64 is exposed when the washer 66 is mounted on fitting 58 in the position described above. A nut element 68 has a threaded center bore 70 which is compatible with the threaded outer surface 62 of fitting 58. When nut element 68 is tightened on threaded portion 62, the washer 66 is in tight engagement with flange 52 of port 54. The outer periphery 72 of nut element 68 has a series of radially extending lugs 74 which frictionally detachably engage the inner surface of flange 76 of cap 78. Nut element can be tightened on washer 66 either as positioned within cap 78, or before cap 78 and the nut element 68 are engaged. A notch 80 is located in flange 76 and is adapted to receive overflow water from tub 18 when required to do so. Notch 80 is normally in a 6 o'clock position on flange 76.

It is important to note that diaphragm 64 is of plastic material, as is fitting 58, and is preferably integrally formed with fitting 58 wherein diaphragm 64 and fitting 58 are one unitary component. Diaphragm 64 is a thin circular plate disk that is joined to fitting 58 by its outer peripheral edge engaging the outer peripheral edge of the fitting 58. If the two components are not molded as one unitary structure, the diaphragm 64 could be connected by fusing, hermetically sealed, or by otherwise rigidly attached" by its outer peripheral edge to the rearward outer peripheral edges of the fitting by a suitable adhesive. No screws or the like are either required or desired.

A second embodiment of the invention can be seen in Fig. 6. In Fig. 6 a one-piece overflow fitting 60A is seen

attached to second vertical drain pipe 34A, and a portion of the overflow fitting 60A passes through overflow port 30.

With reference to Figs. 7-9, shows the bathtub when the overflow fitting 60A is used. Overflow fitting 60A has an overflow pipe 62A with an inverted L-shape. The overflow pipe 62A has an elbow portion 65A which defines an upper end portion 66A and a lower end portion 67A. It will be understood that the overflow pipe 62A may be made of copper, plastic, or any other suitable material.

The upper end portion 66A has threads 68A on its outer surface and also has an outer end 70A. The outer end 70A defines an inlet 71A to the upper end portion 66A of the overflow pipe 62A. The inlet 71A is adapted to fit through the bathtub overflow port 30.

The overflow fitting 60A also has a lip 74A extending radially outwardly from an outer surface of the overflow pipe 62A between the elbow portion 65A and the upper end portion 66A. The lip 74A is spaced from the inlet 71A to engage an outer surface of the bathtub end wall 24 around the bathtub overflow port 30, thereby allowing only the upper end portion 66A to pass through the overflow port 30.

A thin diaphragm 80A is sealed to the outer end 70A of the end portion 66A. The diaphragm 80A is a circular membrane and has a diameter that is not less than the diameter of the outer end 70A of the overflow pipe 62A. In one embodiment, the diaphragm 80A is integral with the outer end 70A and is held to the outer end 70A only through having been integrally formed therewith. The diaphragm 80A may be hermetically sealed to the outer end 70A. The diaphragm 80A may be composed of plastic material, flexible rubber, or the like. The diaphragm 80A is composed of a material that is easily punctured or easily removable.

The overflow pipe fitting 60 further includes, a nut element 90A having threads compatible with the threads 68A on the upper end portion 66A of the overflow pipe 62A. The nut element 90A removably secures the overflow pipe 62A to the bathtub 20 by compressing the end wall 24 between the nut element 90A and the lip 74A. The nut element 90A may be a slip nut.

As shown in Fig. 9, the nut element 90A has a series of radially extending lugs 92A along the nut 90A outer periphery. These lugs 92A detachably engage the inner surface of a cap 96A. The cap 96A serves to cover the overflow pipe fitting 60A hardware.

During installation of the overflow pipe fitting 60A, a washer 94A may be placed between the upper end portion 66A of the overflow pipe 62A and the nut element 90A. The washer 94A seals the overflow pipe fitting 60A to the tub 20.

In operation, the drainage system comprising the ports 28 and 30, and pipes 34, 36, and 38 are installed as shown in Fig. 3. Vent pipe 40 and connecting pipe 42 are also installed.

In the conventional testing procedure, the port 28 is plugged in any convenient manner. For fitting 58 with diaphragm 64 is installed into drain pipe 34 as described above so there is no fluid access to the upper end of pipe 34 either inwardly or outwardly through overflow port 30. The vent pipe is charged with water at some elevation above pipe 42 so that the building inspectors can check to see if there are any leaks in the system. Having determined that there are no leaks, the water is purged from the system. The plumber can then approach overflow port 30, (because cap 78 is not yet installed) and by using knife 86 or the like,

cuts can be made in diaphragm 64 leaving a cutout portion 84 as shown in Fig. 5.

5 Overflow pipe fitting 60A in operation is attached to the second vertical drain pipe 34A already plugged by the diaphragm 80A as described above, so there is no fluid access to the upper end of pipe 34A either inwardly or outwardly out of the overflow port 30. The vertical vent pipe 40 is charged with water at some elevation above pipe 42 so that it can be determined if there are any leaks in
10 the system.

With reference to Fig. 10, having determined that there are no leaks, the water is purged from the system. The plumber can then approach overflow port 30, and by using a cutting device 100A, such as a knife or any other sharp
15 object, cuts 102A can be made in the diaphragm 80A. This can be quickly and easily done without disassembling any of the structure of overflow pipe fitting 60A. Any valve linkage elements required may be installed through cuts 102A, and any cap or cover for the overflow port 30 may be
20 placed over the overflow pipe 62A end portion 66A.

It is therefore seen that this invention eliminates any need to seal shut an overflow pipe 32, 62A even after the pipe 62A has been attached to the second vertical drain pipe 34A. The invention also eliminates any need to remove
25 sealing components from the overflow port 30 after the testing procedure has taken place. In addition, the invention allows a user to install an overflow fitting 60A without using solvent cement. This invention also facilitates the testing procedure and reduces the time
30 needed to seal the overflow port 30, and then to open the diaphragm 64, 80A for possible fluid flow.

It is therefore seen this invention will achieve at

least all of its stated objectives.